



**Health Department Urges Parents to Protect Kids' Teeth During  
National Children's Dental Health Month**

In conjunction with National Children's Dental Health Month in February, the Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center is urging parents to help protect their children's teeth. Tooth decay among children is a growing concern. A report from the U.S. Surgeon General's Office indicates that tooth decay is the single most common chronic childhood disease, and that minority populations represent the sector with the highest risk.

"Children need the guidance of their parents or guardians to develop good oral health habits at a young age," said Irene Pierce, the Health Department's Executive Director. "Good habits pay off with fewer cavities, less time missed from school due to tooth aches, and better health."

To protect children's teeth, the Health Department recommends the following:

- Infants should not be allowed to go to sleep with a bottle of milk or other liquid (other than water), which promotes tooth decay.
- A child's first visit to the dentist should be before his or her first birthday. Parents should bring in their children every six months after that.
- Children's teeth should be brushed twice a day.

- Children can usually floss their own teeth when they reach fourth grade. Prior to that, parents can floss their kids' teeth using a special fork-shaped tool.
- Use fluoridated toothpaste (make sure the ingredients include fluoride).
- Make sure that fluoride is in your drinking water. For those who are on a private well, the water should be tested to determine the natural level of fluoride. If that level is too low, fluoride tablets can be added.
- Children should avoid large amounts of sweets.
- Have a dentist apply a dental sealant on the first molars of 6- and 7-year-olds. This protects the top of the tooth from decay. It is also good to have sealants placed when children are 12 to 13 years of age on their second molars.

The Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center maintains five dental clinics in Waukegan (on Belvidere Road and on Grand Avenue), Round Lake Beach, North Chicago and Highland Park for all age groups. Services are based on a sliding fee scale. Public aid is accepted. While LCHD/CHC provides access to services without regard for a person's ability to pay, services are not free. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, call the Health Department at: (847) 377-8410 or visit:

<http://www.lakecountyil.gov/Health/want/Dental.htm>.